

Posted On: 6/10/2008

PSM Peer Review

Vicki Powers

Property management systems (PMS) are essential to a well-run hotel operation. Their managerial roles are vast, and can include everything from online guest bookings, to telephones, to the point of sale. They may interface with a hotels' central reservations system, revenue management, back-office software and beyond.

But not all property management systems meet the same needs in the same way. Some are favored for their ease-of-use, while others offer robust functionality. For other systems, integration is a key differentiator.



In this first-ever peer review of PMS systems, a selection of HT readers offer their informal input on the property management systems that keep their operations running smoothly.

La Fonda Hotel

Core needs: integration, user-friendly

Locations: 2

Vendor: NORTHWIND (www.northwind.com)

Product: Maestro PMS

La Fonda Hotel, a boutique, family-owned establishment in Santa Fe, New Mexico, was forced to re-examine its property management system needs about a year before it planned. Its previous vendor stopped offering product support, which spurred the change.

Lance Echols, director of front office operations, said one important requirement in the new system was finding a clean, user-friendly application since it operates as an independent hotel. The hotel selected NORTHWIND's Maestro Property Management Suite.

By January 2005, Maestro PMS was in place at La Fonda and ultimately its sister property in Prescott, Arizona. "I felt like we were coming out of the dark ages using DOS before the new system," Echols says.

This solution is a great fit for La Fonda, says Echols, because it's easy to train on, it's reliable, and it's a robust tool that works as designed. The primary challenge proved to be in training staff to break their old habits associated with the system they'd used for the past decade.

One of the biggest upgrades for La Fonda in using the new system is operating yield management through the PMS versus a chart and push pins. Maestro talks to the Global Distribution System (GDS) through a third-party company so the public sees the same thing.

"In the past, La Fonda had to update stats and go to an independent company to update manually on their Web site," Echols relates. "Now we update through Maestro and just do it once."

Lakeview Hotels & Resorts

Core needs: flexibility, functionality, Web-based

Locations: 21

Vendor: RSI International (www.welcometorsi.com)

Product: RoomKey Property Management Software

Rapid expansion required Lakeview Hotels & Resorts to consider a new property management system in 2001. With only three properties at the time, today it boasts 21 locations in Canada and the United States.

The hotel chain chose RSI International's PMS solution, RoomKey, three years ago, after first selecting another vendor that didn't provide a great fit. The executive team chose to pursue a smaller company that would be more approachable and easier to work with. RSI, in fact, developed the central reservations system specifically for Lakeview.

"RSI is extremely devoted to continue developing its solution with us since we're its first hotel chain," says Jeannette Clarke, operations manager of technical support. "Our locations strive for exceptional customer service, so finding a company that focuses on that was a great fit for us."

One of the most attractive features with RoomKey, according to Clarke, is the ability to access information anytime and anywhere through a Web-based server. "If I can open my laptop and assist a property with a technical issue without being onsite, that's amazingly easy," Clarke

webCONNECTIONseries

**New Frontiers for CRM Data:
A lodging industry primer for
leveraging CRM tools
to their fullest potential**

VIEW THE ARCHIVE

Sponsored by:

Microsoft[®]

Web Events

New Frontiers for CRM Data: A lodging industry primer for leveraging CRM tools to their fullest potential

May 15, 2008 | 1 pm Eastern Standard Time

Hotels from all market segments can take their guest experience management to new levels with innovative uses for CRM data. Find out how in this recorded web seminar. [View Web Event](#)

An Introduction to Social Networking for Lodging Executives

**March 6, 2008 | 1 pm Eastern Standard Time
(10 am Pacific Standard Time)**

Social networking offers a monumental opportunity for lodging companies to build customer loyalty, boost their competitive edge and reinvent the guest experience. Find out how to effectively implement and leverage social networking through this exclusive webinar on demand. [View Web Event](#)

[More Web Events...](#)

White Papers



OneSign Eliminates Reservation Bottlenecks and Boosts Productivity Worldwide at Hilton Grand Vacations

2/25/2008

In hospitality, the inability to complete a sale can affect a company's ability to be successful. Through OneSign, Imprivata is making it easier to complete the sales process. Find out how in this exclusive white paper.

[More White Papers...](#)

- POS Hardware
- Multi-Site Management
- Inventory Management
- Wireless Technology
- Kiosks/Interactive Systems

[View complete buyers' guide, click](#)

relates.

With a Web-based solution, back ups are not part of the nightly process and expensive hardware is not required. Staff productivity has increased dramatically, according to Clarke, especially its nightly audit process that used to span four hours and now takes only 30 minutes.

A hidden benefit is RSI's environmentally friendly focus to help hotel owners reduce the amount of electricity required to host PMS servers. RSI's RoomKey solution uses 94 percent less energy than a traditional server-based solution.

Hawthorn Suites

Core needs: two-way interface with PMS and reservations

Locations: 98

Vendor: MSI (www.msisolutions.com)

Product: WinPM

Juggling eight different systems throughout Hawthorn Suites' properties proved time-consuming and challenging, says David Kemp, vice president and brand manager, Hawthorn Suites. As the hotel tried building an online hotel dashboard platform, all the stats important to the hotel came in from different sources. A search began for a new property management system.

Hawthorn Suites selected MSI's WinPM in 2006 and installed it throughout all the franchise locations over a six-month period. Hawthorn uses a number of modules including central reservations and sales.

Kemp says one of the core needs of its new solution was a two-way interface between the PMS and reservation system, Trust Voyager. He says it's vital to have a single image inventory to manage content rates and availability. Now all data flows back and forth between the hotel and reservation system, which makes revenue management a simpler and more effective task.

MSI took the lead in training employees during installation and sent trainers to educate employees on PMS features for several days. The company also offers ShopTalk, a one-hour teleconference, to bring new managers up to speed as a result of the notoriously high turnover in the industry, Kemp says.

"MSI is on top of keeping hotels educated on how to use the product," Kemp says. "I'm pleased with their level of support and response to customer service."

To ease the upgrade costs for franchisees, which has ranged from \$20,000 to \$30,000, Hawthorn split half the costs with each hotel and ultimately got 90 percent of the locations on board. Kemp says Hawthorn Suites believed the new PMS system was critical to its success, which is why it decided to chip in half the costs.

Madden's on Gull Lake

Core needs: one system from one vendor, simple training

Locations: 1

Vendor: Agilysys (www.agilysys.com)

Product: Agilysys Visual One PMS

Madden's on Gull Lake, a luxury resort in Minnesota spread over 1,000 acres, needed a new PMS to replace the five different systems it previously operated, each from a different vendor. In 2005 it selected a system from Visual One, now part of Agilysys.

Chad Parks, director of information systems, is thoroughly pleased with the way the PMS integrates with other modules such as golf, spa, retail, POS, sales and catering, and dining. The solution provides an easy learning curve for employees since many staff members are cross trained between departments. With the same interface, Parks says if an employee knows one system, he can easily use another. This utilizes the staff better with little training.

"Our ultimate goal is to give the guest better service and better streamline the experience for the guest," Parks relates. "Capturing guest history, for example, allows reservation agents to often anticipate guests' interests and suggest or upsell activities. This really seals the deal a lot of times, since much of our business is repeat."

Integration with the PMS reduced accounting labor and front desk labor as well as time. In the past, receipts from the golf course were physically taken to the front for billing. Today, purchases are automatically captured in the system and put on the guest folio. Group billing was another area that required a manual process. Now, staff members push one button to generate a bill for guests. The system also reduced the need one person in the accounting department to manually balance tape with cash.

"Communication has greatly improved as well," Parks says. "We're not having to rely on paper, and staff can pull up any information they need at any time."

The Woodmark Hotel

Core needs: group-module capability, accounts receivables piece, interface to existing systems

Locations: 1 (1 of 8 in MTM Luxury Lodging)

Vendor: PAR Springer-Miller (www.springermiller.com)

Product: SMS Host Hospitality Management System

In 1999, The Woodmark Hotel needed to replace its PMS for Y2K preparedness. The hotel, yacht club and spa selected Springer-Miller's SMS Host Hospitality Management System based on its ability to meet the needs of a luxury, boutique hotel.

Through the years, PAR Springer-Miller has continually updated its PMS by adding new modules and features. The Woodmark added SMS World booking engine in 2001 when it acquired a neighboring spa. Rate and package information is pulled directly from SMS Host and displayed on the Web with real-time availability. It also runs SMS Enterprise, which flows reservations to each property within MTM Luxury Lodging from a central reservations center.



here.

Chuck Marratt, director of IT at MTM Luxury Lodging, says for training purposes it's easy for the IT staff to create a demo version of the system. This unique option features actual guests, reservations and live data in the demo for training staff.

Regarding benefits, Marratt says SMS Host enables night audit and accounting to run smoothly with less re-entering of data. The ROI also pays off by having their own booking engine and not outsourcing to a third-party provider.

The Chandler Inn Hotel

Core needs: scalability, affordability

Locations: 1

Vendor: NOVEXSYS (www.novexsys.com)

Product: NOVEXSYS PMS

The Chandler Inn Hotel, a boutique, Boston-based property, started looking for a new property management system in 2008 when it learned that support for its current system would cease this summer.

Gretchen Chauncey, general manager, wanted an affordable solution that was not bloated with unneeded features. Web-based PMS proved to be the best option, especially since Chauncey didn't want to worry with replacing computer systems and software.

NOVEXSYS PMS offers The Chandler Inn Hotel a software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution that operates with the hotel's existing hardware. All support and upgrades are provided in real-time, online, which Chauncey says is ideal for this property. This solution also integrates with the hotel's phone system, which saves a step at check out. (Previously, employees had to manually look up and input phone charges during the check-out process.)

"The nice thing about this system is that the need for in-house IT is dramatically reduced," Chauncey relates. "It's so exciting as a small, independent property to get a state-of-the-art PMS system without a huge expenditure."

NOVEXSYS offered online training for staff and access from any computer. The Web-based solution also enables access to reports from any location.

[MEDIA KIT](#) | [EDITORIAL CALENDAR](#) | [PRIVACY STATEMENT](#) | [TERMS & CONDITIONS](#) | [CONTACT US](#)

All materials on this site Copyright © Edgell Communications. All rights reserved.



So, how do you want **your** HD?